



Our Old Bookcase, September 7, 2017, Swimming at Edgewater Park, Celina, 1907

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**Photo caption:** At Edgewater Park in Celina, the Diving Board at this Diving Platform had quite a spring to it, if you see the diver on the right hand side of the post card photograph, in 1907.

### **OUR OLD BOOK CASE**

***By Joyce L. Alig, President, Mercer County Historical Society***

On this post card photograph, summer was over. Labor Day weekend was over. It was time to catch the last of the warm weather and the fun at Edgewater Park, before the cold weather came to stay.

Summer recreation has been a part of our lives in Mercer County, for as long as we can remember. Years ago, Lima and Dayton citizens, and others, would return to their summer homes around the lake, and would spend a lazy summer enjoying the pleasant world of living on the lake.

Nearly a century ago, in the wintertime, the men who owned the ice houses, would cut ice blocks from the frozen lake, and load the ice blocks on their wagons to go to the ice houses to be covered with sawdust. That following summer, the ice man would deliver blocks of ice, to the homes to use in their ice boxes.

When we were young, I remember we went on picnics and went swimming at Grand Lake. My Grandfather went fishing at Windy Point, and we looked forward to eating fresh fish that evening. Over the years, so many restaurants were available where we could eat at picnic tables on the banks of the lake. During Lake Festival, decorated boats joined the parade across the lake. Fishing contests were popular, as to who would catch the biggest fish.

Many of those “older summer homes,” are gone now. The value of land around the lake has skyrocketed. Businesses have invested around the lake. Citizens have constructed beautiful homes around the lake.

What has happened to the history of this lake? Has the value of the land around the lake peaked, and leveled off? I saw the headlines in “*The Daily Standard*” on Thursday, August 24. Are the land owners around Grand Lake, selling their properties and leaving the lake? Auglaize and Mercer Countians are directly affected by what happens at Grand Lake. The tourists spend their tourist dollars in Mercer and Auglaize Counties, which improves the local economy.

We know very well that the State of Ohio owns Grand Lake. In addition to the State of Ohio caring for the lake, local organizations, e.g. The Lake Development Corporation, the Lake Improvement Association, and other organizations, are excellent volunteer organizations who work to serve the needs of Grand Lake and the area around this lake. It is sad that summer is over, but we know summer will return next spring. It is sad that the Lake’s ecosystem is not improving as fast as we would like it to do.

Every summer, tourists who are visiting Grand Lake, call me at my home phone, asking for information about the historic sites in Mercer County, or asking me to open the County Historical Museum for them to visit. Since I retired as Museum Director on February 29, 2004, Historical Society Members join me to open the County Historical Museum, for special events, and by appointment. I keep a list of events and Open Houses, posted at the front door of the Mercer County Historical Museum. It is sad that the Mercer County Commissioners no longer employ a Director for the Mercer County Historical Museum.

I am not sad that I spent most of my adult life, working to preserve Mercer County’s history because I truly believe that most Mercer Countians value the Mercer County Historical Society and Mercer County Historical Museum to preserve the history of our County, including the history of Grand Lake.

I trust that future Mercer Countians will see that the County Historical Museum will once again see the need for an academically trained Museum Director to open the Mercer County Historical Museum on a regular schedule, to serve schools, local citizens and tourists who visit Grand Lake, not only during the summer season, but throughout all four seasons.

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